

THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

(6902)

September 20, 1972

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: Burundi - population 3.5 million

Aug 90

As had happened often in the past, on April 29 a group of Hutus tried to precipitate a revolt against the ruling Tutsi tribe. The revolt failed but touched off a bloody reprisal that led to possibly over 100,000 Hutu deaths, and to nearly a half-million Hutu widows and orphans.

Tribalism was at the root of the Burundi warfare. The Hutus, who represent 85% of the population, wanted to overthrow the tall Tutsi (Watusis) who make up 15% of the people. The Hutu rebels killed every Tutsi that they ran across during their initial rampage which triggered the Tutsi decision to exterminate all Hutus with any semblance of leadership, i. e., those who could read or write, or those who wore shoes. Sixty thousand Hutus fled the country.

The Burundi tragedy appears to have been a strictly internal, tribal matter. Except for Zaire, which at first assisted the Burundi Government because it believed the invading rebels were connected with former Congolese dissidents, there was no African intervention. In fact, no African leader spoke out publicly against the massacres nor sought to involve the UN or the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

The United States, for humanitarian reasons and due to some Congressional concern (Senators Kennedy and Tunney), tried to interest the Africans in taking the matter to the OAU. Only Mobutu contemplated such action. Leaders such as Selassie, Ahidjo and Nyerere did not want to intervene in Burundi's internal affairs. We also urged the UN to establish a humanitarian presence hoping that this would lead to an end to the repression. Such a presence came too late.

Burundi's former colonial master, Belgium, publicly denounced the Burundi genocide, stopped military aid and slowed down their economic assistance. This had little effect on the Tutsi Government. Other Europeans, particularly the French, maintained a hands-off posture.

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There is no evidence that the PRC or USSR have played any role in Burundi, or that they seek to profit from the situation.

The outlook for the future seems bleak. Reconciliation between the Hutus and Tutsis seems impossible, and it is hard to imagine a stable situation before the majority Hutus prevail, as they have in neighboring Rwanda.

Our own interests in Burundi are microscopic (we buy some coffee). We have 150 citizens there, mostly missionaries. There has never been any threat to the safety of Europeans, whose protection the Burundi Government assured to avoid outside intervention.

It is present US policy to give humanitarian assistance to Burundi if we can assure its distribution to all the population. Otherwise, we are assisting refugees outside the country.

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By hm/hw NARA, Date 11/29/99

This is one of our most
Cynical callous reactions of
a great govt to a terrible human
tragedy I have ever seen.
When Balas try to put down a
rebellion in E Bal - the world
screams. When Indians Kill a
few thousand Balas no one cares -
Biafra stars us because of Catholic
the Israeli Olympic because of Jews
the North V. Nam bombs because of
Communist leanings in our established
But when 100,000 (1/3 of all the people of a black
country) are murdered - we say + do nothing

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outlets begin by
calling on our Ambassador immediately for
consolidation. And under the circumstances we will
be unable to provide assistance to the Burundi.

we must not make blanket
statements when Catholics are killed
look at the carpet when Catholics are killed

I do not buy this
double standard - the
the world is in the system
of the world is in the system
of the world is in the system

... and so, we favor our reader
with a translation.

K -

This is one of the most cynical, callous reactions of a great government to a terrible human tragedy I have ever seen. When Paks try to put down a rebellion in East Pakistan, the world screams. When Indians kill a few thousand Paks, no one cares. Biafra stirs us because of Catholics; the Israeli Olympics because of Jews; the North Vietnam bombings ~~stir us~~ because of Communist leanings in our establishment. But when 100,000 (one-third of all the people of a black country) are murdered, we say and do nothing because we must not make blacks look bad (except, of course, when Catholic blacks are killed).

I do not buy this double standard. Tell the weak sisters in the African Bureau of State to give a recommendation as to how we can at least show moral outrage. And let's begin by calling back our Ambassador immediately for consultation. Under no circumstances will I appoint a new Ambassador to present credentials to these butchers.

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